

PCT REQUEST



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P13331/MA

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VIII-4-1	<p>Declaration: Inventorship (only for the purposes of the designation of the United States of America)</p> <p>Declaration of inventorship (Rules 4.17(iv) and 51bis.1(a)(iv)) for the purposes of the designation of the United States of America:</p> <p><b>COPY</b></p>	<p>I hereby declare that I believe I am the original, first and sole (if only one inventor is listed below) or joint (if more than one inventor is listed below) inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought.</p> <p>This declaration is directed to the international application of which it forms a part (if filing declaration with application).</p> <p>I hereby declare that my residence, mailing address, and citizenship are as stated next to my name.</p> <p>I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified international application, including the claims of said application. I have identified in the request of said application, in compliance with PCT Rule 4.10, any claim to foreign priority, and I have identified below, under the heading "Prior Applications," by application number, country or Member of the World Trade Organization, day, month and year of filing, any application for a patent or inventor's certificate filed in a country other than the United States of America, including any PCT international application designating at least one country other than the United States of America, having a filing date before that of the application on which foreign priority is claimed.</p>
VIII-4-1 -1	Prior applications:	<p>02445177.5, EP, 16 December 2002 (16.12.2002)</p> <p>03011580.2, EP, 22 May 2003 (22.05.2003)</p>

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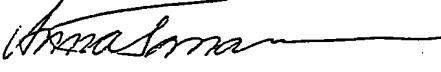
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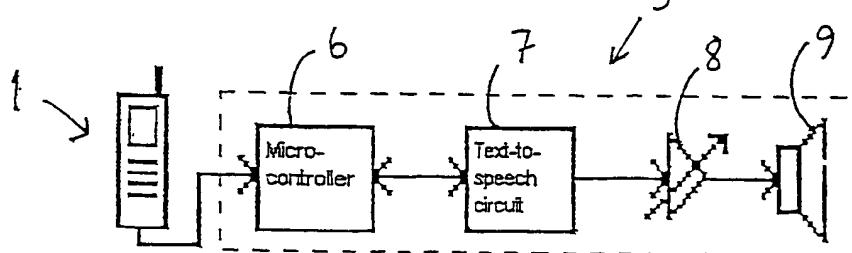
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(54) Title: DEVICE FOR GENERATING SPEECH, APPARATUS CONNECTABLE TO OR INCORPORATING SUCH A DEVICE, AND COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCT THEREFOR

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(57) Abstract: The invention relates to a device for generating speech associated with information shown on a display (2), especially displays on portable devices such as mobile telephones (1). A conversion circuit converts the data shown to audible speech helping the user to operate the apparatus. The invention also relates to an apparatus arranged to cooperate with such a device or incorporating such a device, and a computer program product therefor.

DEVICE FOR GENERATING SPEECH, APPARATUS CONNECTABLE TO OR  
INCORPORATING SUCH A DEVICE, AND COMPUTER PROGRAM  
PRODUCT THEREFOR

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5 Field of invention

The present invention relates to a device for generating speech associated with information shown on a display, especially displays on portable devices such as mobile telephones and the like. A conversion circuit converts the data shown to audible speech helping the user to operate the apparatus. The invention also relates  
10 to an apparatus arranged to cooperate with such a device or incorporating such a device, and a computer program product therefor.

State of the art

In portable devices such as mobile telephones etc. the displays are used to  
15 display menus controlling the operation and settings of the device or other information relating to messages or games. The displays are often small, which may be a problem for the user, especially if he is visually impaired. Also for other reasons, there is a need for an audible version of the display.

The present invention solves this problem by transforming the information  
20 displayed to audible speech.

Summary of the invention

In a first aspect, the invention provides a device for generating speech, wherein a microcontroller is connectable to an apparatus for receiving data to be  
25 converted to speech, and sending the data to a conversion circuit; and a conversion circuit connectable to a speaker system for converting the data to a speech signal.

Preferably, the data is supplied as ASCII characters.

30 Suitably, the conversion circuit supports various selectable languages and the conversion circuit is capable of downloading languages via the connected apparatus.

Suitably, the conversion circuit supports various selectable voices and the conversion circuit is capable of downloading voices via the connected apparatus.

35

Preferably, the speed of the speech signal is adjustable.

Preferably, the microcontroller is connectable to a memory containing language information, such as various languages, abbreviation lists and dictionaries.

Preferably, the microcontroller is connectable to a memory containing voice settings.

5 Suitably, the microcontroller is connectable to the apparatus by means of a system connector having an interface for audio signals, serial channels, power leads and analog and digital ground leads.

10 The device may be implemented as a functional cover, comprising a shell covering the front of the apparatus and a microprocessor cooperating with the processor of the apparatus.

The connectable apparatus may be a portable telephone, a pager, a communicator or an electronic organiser.

15 In a second aspect, the invention provides an apparatus having a display for showing various readable data, wherein a control unit is arranged to extract readable data for sending to a device for generating speech as mentioned above.

20 The readable data may include texts from menus, text messages, help information, calendars or confirmation of actions taken with the apparatus.

Suitably, the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it automatically to the speech generating device at a fixed or controllable rate, and/or the control unit is arranged to extract a line at a time from the display and sending it to the speech generating device in dependence of scrolling in the display.

25 Suitably, the control unit is also arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a character, a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it to the speech generating device in dependence of inputting characters to the apparatus.

Then, the control unit may be arranged to send readable data as triggered by the input of definite characters, such as letters, signs, spaces or punctuation marks.

35 Preferably, the control unit is arranged to extract readable data from a selected file and sending it automatically to the speech generating device at a fixed or controllable rate.

In a third aspect, the invention provides an apparatus having a display for showing various readable data, including a control unit and a device for generating speech comprising a conversion circuit for converting data to a speech signal and connectable to a speaker system, wherein the control unit is arranged to extract  
5 readable data for sending to the speech generating device.

The speaker system may be integrated with the apparatus.

**COPY**

Suitably, the data is supplied as ASCII characters.

10

Suitably, the conversion circuit supports various selectable languages, and is capable of downloading languages.

15

Suitably, the conversion circuit supports various selectable voices, and is capable of downloading voices.

Preferably, the speed of the speech signal is adjustable.

20

Suitably, the apparatus is connectable to a memory containing language information, such as various languages, abbreviation lists and dictionaries.

Suitably, the apparatus is connectable to a memory containing voice settings.

25

Preferably, the readable data includes texts from menus, text messages, help information, calendars or confirmation of actions taken with the apparatus.

30

Suitably, the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it automatically to the speech generating device at a fixed or controllable rate, and/or the control unit is arranged to extract a line at a time from the display and sending it to the speech generating device in dependence of scrolling in the display.

35

Suitably, the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a character, a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it to the speech generating device in dependence of inputting characters to the apparatus.

Then, the control unit may be arranged to send readable data as triggered by the input of definite characters, such as letters, signs, spaces or punctuation marks.

Preferably, the control unit is arranged to extract readable data from a selected file and sending it automatically to the speech generating device at a fixed or controllable rate.

5 The apparatus may be a portable telephone, a pager, a communicator or an electronic organiser.

In a fourth aspect, the invention provides a computer program product loadable into the internal memory of an apparatus having a display for showing various readable

10 data, wherein the computer program product comprises software code portions to achieve the functionality of the apparatus as mentioned above.

The computer program product may be embodied on a computer readable medium.

15 Brief description of the drawings

Embodiments of the invention will be described in detail below with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

fig. 1 is a block diagram of the main blocks of the invention,  
fig. 2 is a perspective view of a system connector,  
20 fig. 3 is a data flow diagram, and  
fig. 4 is an example of a mobile phone using the present invention.

Detailed description of preferred embodiments

The invention will be described in relation to a mobile phone including text-to-speech conversion. The invention is also applicable in many other devices, e.g. pagers, communicators, electronic organisers and the like portable devices.

Text-to-speech conversion is a feature that is of interest in many different areas and applications. One of the more interesting is the use in mobile phones. Today mobile phones are used by almost everyone and a feature like this can be an important aid, especially for the visually impaired and for users who need to focus on other things while using the phone, for instance car drivers using hands-free equipment. The text-to-speech conversion is done in hardware with a text-to-speech circuit. A highlighted menu label, an SMS or other readable data are sent to a microcontroller. The data may be received as ASCII characters and these are forwarded to the text-to-speech circuit by the microcontroller. The text-to-speech circuit converts the characters to audio signals and sends them to a loudspeaker system.

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The invention makes the mobile telephone more user-friendly by reading messages and menus to help the user locate himself while browsing the menus system.

Fig. 1 shows an embodiment of the invention in which the speech generating device is implemented as an accessory. The accessory is to be attached to a mobile phone 1 via its system connector. The accessory may be implemented as a so called active or functional cover, that is a shell covering e.g. the front of the phone and also connected to the phone's system connector. The functional cover contains a microprocessor holding additional functions and cooperating with the processor of the telephone. Thus, the actual outer shape of the accessory depends on the mobile phone and is not shown here.

The speech generating device 5 is shown within the dashed square and includes a microcontroller 6 receiving the data to be converted from the mobile phone and passing it to a text-to-speech (TTS) circuit 7. The TTS circuit 7 converts the text to audio signals and sends them via an (optional) amplifier 8 to a loudspeaker 9.

In another embodiment, the speech generating device is built into the mobile phone and may use the internal hardware, software and speaker system 11, see figure 4. Existing telephones are usually provided with a microprocessor and a digital signal processor capable of being programmed to perform the required text to speech conversion. Thus, the text to speech conversion may be embodied as a software product, e.g. a computer program on a readable medium or deliverable through the Internet.

The microcontroller may for example be a commercially available circuit comprising a programmable flash memory, general purpose input/output lines and working registers, internal and external interrupts, a programmable serial universal asynchronous receiver and transmitter (UART) and a port for a serial peripheral interface. The registers are programmed to control the behaviour of the microcontroller in the desired way. The microcontroller is responsible for receiving the data to be converted to speech and sending the data to the TTS circuit.

The TTS circuit 7 may be a commercially available circuit. The circuit should have an output designed to drive a speaker, and preferably also a telesocket for headphone or an external loudspeaker. To get a higher volume a general amplifier 8 could be used, e.g. a fully differential audio power amplifier.

The TTS circuit should also support SMS (Short Message Service) and preferably a modifiable abbreviation list. The TTS circuit also should support various languages. In a preferred embodiment it is possible to program other languages through a serial port allowing the user to download different languages. A standard speaker voice is built-in, but preferably it is also possible to download

different speaker voices or connect external memories, for instance so called memory sticks, containing voice data. When the speech generating device is connected or integrated in a mobile phone or communicator, databases could be downloaded via the telecommunication network or the Internet.

5        The TTS circuit receives data to be read through its input port, e.g. ASCII characters, converts it into spoken audio and sends it to an analog output. A typical circuit comprises a text processor, a smoothing filter and multilevel memory storage array. The voice and audio signals are stored in the memory in their natural, uncompressed form, which provides a good voice reproduction quality.

10      The speech conversion is conventional and is not described in detail here. Briefly, the text-to-speech mechanism comprises text normalisation, word to phoneme conversion and phoneme mapping. The text normalisation is the process of translating the incoming text to pronounceable words. It expands abbreviations and translates numeric strings to spoken words. The abbreviation list can be  
15 modified. This enables flexibility of adding abbreviations specifically for the text, either by the developer or by the end user to customise the device. Even the unique characters of SMS are supported, meaning that icons such as smilies ;-) will be replaced by its corresponding true spoken meaning. This means that an SMS containing abbreviations and icons will be correctly recited.

20      The TTS circuit should have an internal input buffer that could hold at least 256 characters in order to receive an entire SMS consisting of 160 characters. This means that no extra memory is needed in the connecting apparatus.

25      The microcontroller 6 preferably is connected to a volume control to adjust the volume of a speaker system connected. For instance, two buttons could be provided, one to increase the volume and one to decrease the volume. The buttons are suitably connected to the interrupt pins of the microcontroller.

30      The speech generating device is provided with an interface for connecting the device to the phone via its system connector. The system connector interface comprises audio signals, two serial channels, power leads and the analog and digital ground leads. A typical system connector interface 10 is shown in fig. 2.

35      The mobile telephone is arranged to extract texts and characters from the data shown on the display and to send it to the speech generating device. The extracted text string may be sent to the device to place the data on the system bus. All text strings are stored in a list and a text ID is a pointer used to point out the different text strings.

Fig. 3 shows the data flow diagram between the blocks in the system. The different blocks need the right interfaces to communicate properly with each other. The interface between the phone 1 and the microcontroller 6 consists of a universal asynchronous receiver and transmitter UART, while the microcontroller 6 and the

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TTS circuit 7 communicate via a serial peripheral interface. The UART may form part of a commercial microcontroller.

Fig. 4 shows an example of the operation of the present invention. The mobile phone 1 includes a display 2 currently showing part of a message, e.g. an SMS. The keypad includes scroll buttons 3 for moving in the display. Currently one line 4 of the display is marked by highlighting the text. In an automatic mode, the control unit extracts one line or word after another at a fixed or adjustable rate and sends it automatically to the speech generating device for translating into spoken audio signals. It is preferably possible to pause, rewind and move fast forward in the text. The speed of the speech reading the text can be adjusted to suit each individual.

In another mode, the user scrolls in the display by means of the buttons 3 to select one line for sending to conversion circuit and reading aloud. The user may also select a whole text or a file, such as a message or downloaded article. The selected text is sent to the conversion circuit.

In a further mode, the text to speech conversion is active when the user is writing a message, such as an SMS. After inputting a letter or sign, this is read aloud. When a whole word is finished, e.g. as triggered by the input of a space, the word is sent to the conversion circuit and read aloud. Further, when a punctuation mark is input the whole last sentence may be read, and finally the whole message may be read before it is sent. The control unit sends the text to be read automatically in dependence of a definite set of characters, such as spaces and punctuation marks, and also, optionally, each input sign or letter.

The text-to-speech conversion in the phone is not only an aid for the visually impaired and car drivers but also a step further in personalising the phone. Some of the possibilities with the text-to-speech function in a mobile telephone are:

- Interaction with voice control. A voice command from the user can be used to control functions in the phone, like make a call or navigating in menus, and the speech function can then confirm the commands and possibly add help messages.
- Extended help functions, giving spoken explanations to a selected topic, like a step-by-step instruction on how to install an e-mail account. The whole instruction manual can be accessed in this way. This function can be activated and controlled by a shortcut or by voice recognition.
- By saving texts on memory sticks connectable to the device or the mobile phone, it is possible to have huge text masses like books read.
- Reading reminder and alerts from a calendar.
- Reading pages and articles downloaded from the Internet or by WAP.

- Use as a navigation aid together with GPS (Global Positioning System) and the Yellow Pages route service.

Different voices are possible. It is contemplated that popular voices like film stars etc. could be available for downloading or sold as connectable memory sticks.

- 5 The spoken audio signal could also be combined with music files, e.g. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) files.

The invention may be implemented as a separate accessory connectable to an apparatus; or an apparatus incorporating such a device. The invention also relates to an apparatus connectable to such a device. The invention may be implemented by  
10 hardware or by software included in a self-contained apparatus or various combinations thereof. The scope of the invention is only limited by the claims below.

## CLAIMS

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1. A device (5) for generating speech, **characterised by:**  
a microcontroller (6) connectable to an apparatus for receiving data to be converted to speech, and sending the data to a conversion circuit (7);  
5 a conversion circuit (7) connectable to a speaker system (9) for converting the data to a speech signal.
- 10 2. A device according to claim 1, **characterised in that** the data is supplied as ASCII characters.
- 15 3. A device according to claim 1 or 2, **characterised in that** the conversion circuit (7) supports various selectable languages.
- 20 4. A device according to claim 3, **characterised in that** the conversion circuit (7) is capable of downloading languages via the connected apparatus.
- 25 5. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 4, **characterised in that** the conversion circuit (7) supports various selectable voices.
- 30 6. A device according to claim 5, **characterised in that** the conversion circuit (7) is capable of downloading voices via the connected apparatus (1).
7. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 6, **characterised in that** the speed of the speech signal is adjustable.
- 25 8. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 7, **characterised in that** the microcontroller (6) is connectable to a memory containing language information, such as various languages, abbreviation lists and dictionaries.
- 30 9. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 8, **characterised in that** the microcontroller (6) is connectable to a memory containing voice settings.
10. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 9, **characterised in that** the microcontroller (6) is connectable to the apparatus (1) by means of a system connector having an interface (10) for audio signals, serial channels, power leads and analog and digital ground leads.
- 35 11. A device according to claims 10, **characterised in that** the device is implemented as a functional cover, comprising a shell covering the front of the

apparatus (1) and a microprocessor cooperating with the processor of the apparatus (1).

12. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 11, **characterised in that the connectable apparatus (1) is a portable telephone, a pager, a communicator or an electronic organiser.**
13. An apparatus (1) having a display (2) for showing various readable data, **characterised by a control unit arranged to extract readable data for sending to a device (5) for generating speech in accordance with any one of the preceding claims.**
14. An apparatus according to claim 13, **characterised in that the readable data includes texts from menus, text messages, help information, calendars or confirmation of actions taken with the apparatus (1).**
15. An apparatus according to claims 13 or 14, **characterised in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display (2) and sending it automatically to the speech generating device (5) at a fixed or controllable rate.**
16. An apparatus according to claims 13, 14 or 15, **characterised in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display (2) and sending it to the speech generating device (5) in dependence of scrolling in the display (2).**
17. An apparatus according to claims 13, 14, 15 or 16, **characterised in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word or a character, at a time from the display (2) and sending it to the speech generating device (5) in dependence of inputting characters to the apparatus.**
18. An apparatus according to claims 17, **characterised in that the control unit is arranged to send readable data as triggered by the input of definite characters, such as letters, signs, spaces or punctuation marks.**
- 35 19. An apparatus according to any one of claims 13 to 18, **characterised in that the control unit is arranged to extract readable data from a selected file and sending it automatically to the speech generating device (5) at a fixed or controllable rate.**

**COPY**

20. An apparatus (1) having a display for showing various readable data, characterised by including a control unit and a device for generating speech comprising a conversion circuit for converting data to a speech signal and  
5 connectable to a speaker system (9; 11), wherein the control unit is arranged to extract readable data for sending to the speech generating device .
- 10 21. An apparatus according to claim 20, characterised in that the speaker system (11) is integrated with the apparatus.
22. An apparatus according to claim 20 or 21, characterised in that the data is supplied as ASCII characters.
- 15 23. An apparatus according to claim 20, 21 or 22, characterised in that the conversion circuit supports various selectable languages.
24. An apparatus according to claim 23, characterised in that the apparatus (1) is capable of downloading languages.
- 20 25. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 24, characterised in that the conversion circuit supports various selectable voices.
26. An apparatus according to claim 25, characterised in that the apparatus (1) is capable of downloading voices.  
25
27. An apparatus according to any one of claims 206 to 26, characterised in that the speed of the speech signal is adjustable.
28. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 27, characterised in that  
30 the apparatus (1) is connectable to a memory containing language information, such as various languages, abbreviation lists and dictionaries.
29. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 28, characterised in that the apparatus (1) is connectable to a memory containing voice settings.  
35
30. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 29, characterised in that the readable data includes texts from menus, text messages, help information, calendars or confirmation of actions taken with the apparatus (1).

31. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 29, **characterised** in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it automatically to the speech generating device at a fixed or controllable rate.

5

32. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 31, **characterised** in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a line or a word, at a time from the display and sending it to the speech generating device in dependence of scrolling in the display (2).

10

33. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 32, **characterised** in that the control unit is arranged to extract a part of the readable data, such as a character, a line or a word, at a time from the display (2) and sending it to the speech generating device (5) in dependence of inputting characters to the apparatus.

15

34. An apparatus according to claims 33, **characterised** in that the control unit is arranged to send readable data as triggered by the input of definite characters, such as letters, signs, spaces or punctuation marks.

20

35. An apparatus according to any one of claims 20 to 34, **characterised** in that the control unit is arranged to extract readable data from a selected file and sending it automatically to the speech generating device (5) at a fixed or controllable rate.

25

36. An apparatus according to any one of claims 13 to 35, **characterised** in that the apparatus is a portable telephone, a pager, a communicator or an electronic organiser.

30 37. A computer program product loadable into the internal memory of an apparatus (1) having a display for showing various readable data, **characterised** by comprising software code portions to achieve the functionality of the apparatus in accordance with any one of claims 20 to 36.

35 38. A computer program product according to claim 37, embodied on a computer readable medium.

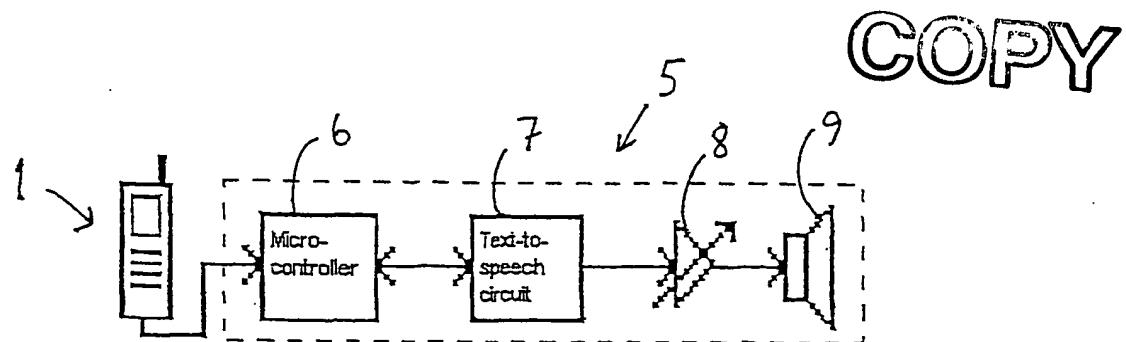


FIG 1

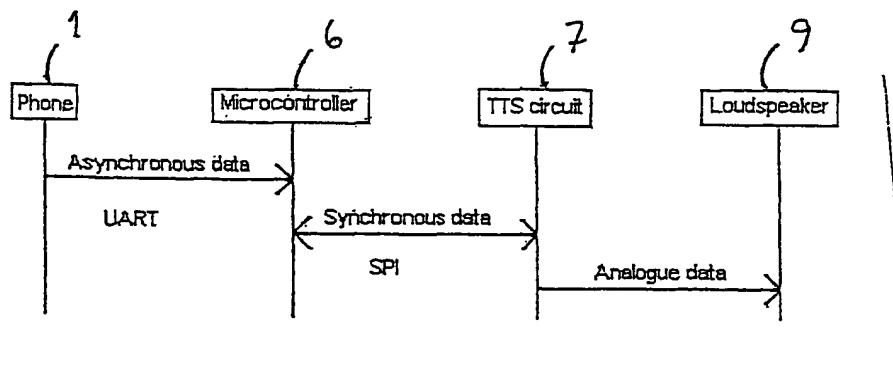


FIG 3

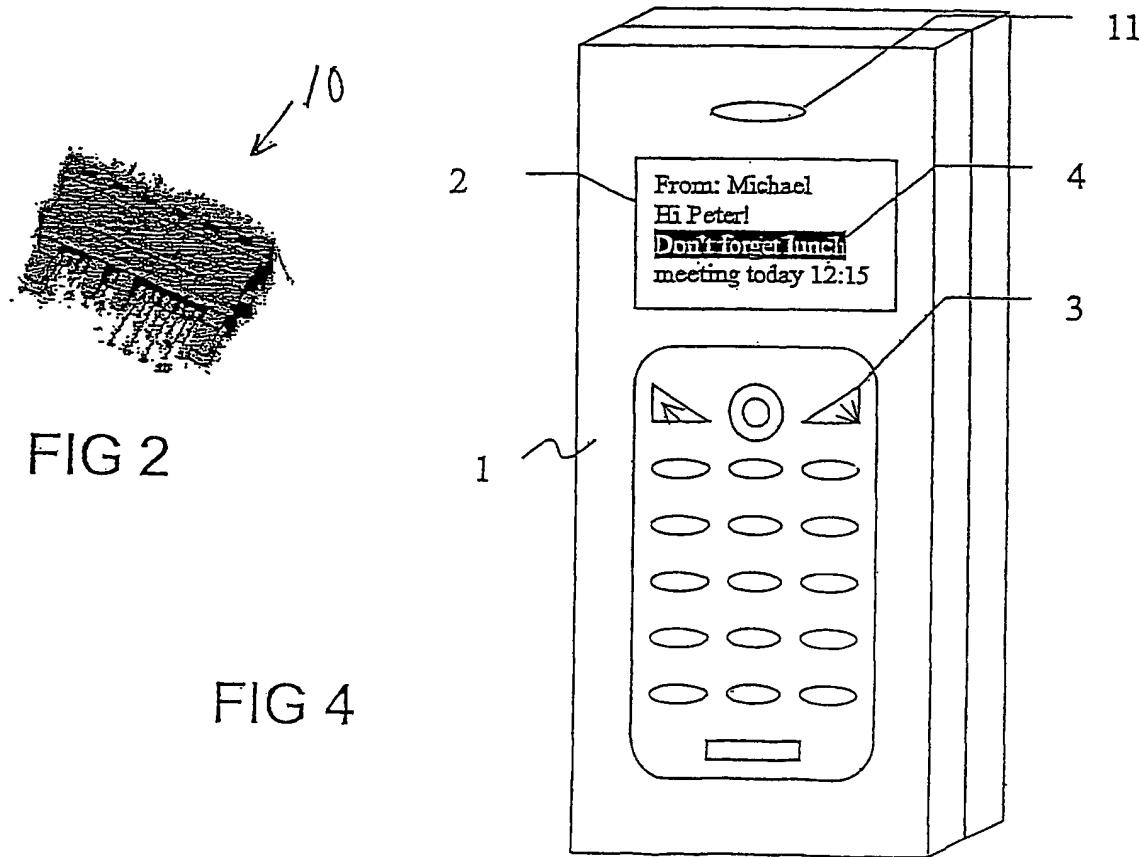


FIG 2

FIG 4

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inten. Application No

PCT/EP 03/12879

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
IPC 7 G10L13/04

COPY

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)  
IPC 7 G10L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, IBM-TDB, INSPEC, COMPENDEX

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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Y	----- -----	16-18, 32-34

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search  23 February 2004	Date of mailing of the international search report  01/03/2004
Name and mailing address of the ISA  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer  Dobler, E

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

I. Application No.

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